

TEMPLATE FOR YOUR TESTIMONY

Testimony of Amanda Caez on SB 1 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOLS.

HB 5465 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOLS.

To: Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on SB 1 and HB 5465. My name is Amanda Caez and I live in Newington, CT. I currently work for Pride and Joy Learning Academy, LLC. Located in Wethersfield, CT. I support a substantial investment in the early care and education system in Connecticut.

The childcare sector is in crisis. We need workers now. Some childcare businesses have closed, but many more have **closed classrooms** because they can't find staff. This puts them in danger of completely closing in the next few months and is already leaving families without care.

The ENTIRE system needs equitable support across all settings. There is no room to raise tuition for parents that can't afford early care and education now.

Early Care educators, directors and staff need substantial wage supplements and benefits for private centers, nonprofit centers (including religious programs) and family childcare providers.

Plus, the state funded and school readiness programs, which have not had a meaningful increase since 2015, need to have reimbursement rates generously adjusted so that they are able to continue to provide high quality care and education.

**** I have been working as a Preschool teacher in the State of Connecticut for the past 8 years, after receiving my Bachelor of Arts degree in E.C.E. I have a true passion for what I do and happily wake up every day to get to work each morning. After attending Bay Path University, and putting myself in \$60,000 of debt in order to follow my dreams, I am reaching the point in my career where I have to question "Was it worth it?" I continue to struggle to make ends meet on a daily basis. Since the pandemic hit in 2020, I have experienced true burn out. My center has lost many employees, causing my director to have to move around teachers in order to help keep us in ratio throughout the days. My director does an amazing job to make sure that her staff is doing okay; however, even she is reaching a point where she does not have many options left. Every day is a new day at work, and the many inconsistencies leave the children with instability and confusion. Confused and burnt out adults cause confused and burnt out children. It is impossible for our children to grow and succeed if their educators are too busy worrying about call-outs or what hiccup the day may bring. I am writing my written testimony because I have a true love for the field of early childhood. Nothing makes me happier than spending my days brainstorming, learning, and growing with my children. I deserve a life where I can do what I absolutely LOVE to do and can still get*

compensated for it. I deserve a life where I could take a day off without feeling terrible about the outcome at work due to shortage of staff. I went to school to do what I love to do and it is truly disheartening when I have friends that are \$0 in debt and can sit at a desk all day to make triple times my salary. I make amazing connections with all of the families I come across. I have solid and loving relationships with all of my students. I will not trade my job for anything in the world. I beg that you hear us out and make a change. Early Childhood Education is a crucial part of a child's growth. We deserve to be seen and compensated, accordingly.

Thank you,

*Amanda Caez
(860) 471-3299*